

Member profile: The Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit (APSU)

This month ARACY welcomes the Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit (APSU) as its 1000th member.



The Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit (APSU) contributes to the national surveillance effort, providing vital information on a range of rare infectious, vaccine-preventable, mental health, congenital and genetic conditions, and injuries affecting children under the age of 15.

The APSU was established in 1993 by Professor Elizabeth Elliott and has been used by more than 220 individual researchers to run 43 surveillance studies - 14 are currently ongoing - and has been influential in the development of international surveillance units. Currently there are 15 surveillance units worldwide. The APSU also facilitated the development of new national surveillance systems including the Paediatric Active Enhanced Disease Surveillance system (PAEDS) and the Australian Maternal Outcomes Surveillance System (AMOSS).

The APSU was the first unit of its kind in the world to undergo systematic evaluation and meet key criteria set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ninety-two percent of all paediatricians practicing in Australia, and other child health clinicians, participate in monthly APSU surveillance by providing de-identified data on children with rare diseases and conditions.

"Without the continued support of these child health clinicians we wouldn't be able to generate vital data to underpin policy and practice and ultimately to improve health outcomes for Australian children and youth," said APSU Deputy Director Dr Yvonne Zurynski.

"We look forward to a productive collaboration with input from ARACY members. We feel that joining ARACY will allow opportunities to network with and to gain opinion and input from other organisations also working towards these goals."

Epidemiological and clinical data collected through the APSU are of direct relevance to clinical and public health policy and resource allocation and thus impact on the health and welfare of Australian children.

Currently APSU is collecting data on the severe complications of influenza during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic and these data will support future pandemic response policy. Recently data collected on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome informed National Health and Medical Research Centre Australian Alcohol Guidelines. Also, data collected on seatbelt-related injuries informed the 7th Amendment to the Australian Road Rules.

For more information on the APSU, go to www.apsu.org.au.